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21

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YEAR TO YEAR

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a  
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

PART 121

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1878.

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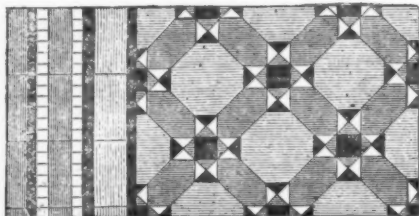
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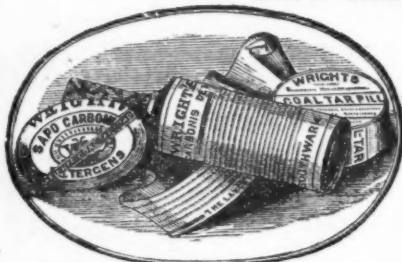
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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF “LADY AUDLEY’S SECRET,” &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XIV. LADY SOUTHMINSTER’S BALL.

CAPTAIN WINSTANLEY closed with Mrs. Hawbuck for the pretty little verandah-surrounded cottage on the slope of the hill above Beechdale. Captain Hawbuck, a retired naval man, to whom the place had been very dear, was in his grave; and his wife was anxious to try if she and her hungry children could not live on less money in Belgium than they could in England. The good old post-captain had improved and beautified the place from a farm-labourer’s cottage into a habitation which was the quintessence of picturesque inconvenience. Ceilings which you could touch with your hand; funny little fire-places in angles of the rooms; a corkscrew staircase, which a stranger ascended or descended at peril of life or limb; no kitchen worth mentioning, and stuffy little bedrooms under the thatch. Seen from the outside the cottage was charming; and if the captain and his family could only have lived over the way, and looked at it, they would have had full value for the money invested in its improvement. Small as the rooms were, and despite that dark slander which hung over the chimneys, Captain Winstanley declared that the cottage would suit him admirably.

“I like the situation,” he said, discussing his bargain in the coffee-room at the Crown, Lyndhurst.

“I should rather think you did!” cried Mr. Bell, the local surgeon. “Suits you down to the ground, doesn’t it?”

Whereby it will be seen that there was already a certain opinion in the neigh-

bourhood as to the captain’s motive for planting himself at Beechdale—so acute is a quiet little community of this kind in divining the intentions of a stranger.

Captain Winstanley took up his quarters at Beechdale Cottage in less than a week after Mrs. Tempest’s dinner-party. He set to for his horses, and began the business of hunting in real earnest. His two hunters were unanimously pronounced screws: but it is astonishing how well a good rider can get across country on a horse which other people call a screw. Nobody could deny Captain Winstanley’s merits as a horseman. His costume and appointments had all the finish of Melton Mowbray, and he was always in the first flight.

Before he had occupied Captain Hawbuck’s cottage a month the newcomer had made friends for himself in all directions. He was as much at home in the Forest, as if he had been native and to the manner born. His straight riding, his good looks, and agreeable manners, won him everybody’s approval. There was nothing dissipated or bohemian about him. His clothes never smelt of stale tobacco. He was as punctual at church, every Sunday morning, as if he had been a family man, bound to set a good example. He subscribed liberally to the hounds, and was always ready with those stray florins and halfcrowns, by which a man purchases a cheap popularity among the horse-holding and ragged-follower class.

Having distinctly asserted her intention of remaining a widow to Violet, Mrs. Tempest allowed herself the privilege of being civil to Captain Winstanley. He dropped in at afternoon tea at least twice a week. He dined at the Abbey House

whenever the Scobels or any other intimate friends were there "in a quiet way." He generally escorted Mrs. Tempest and her daughter from church on a Sunday morning, Violet persistently loitering twenty yards or so behind them on the narrow woodland path that led from Beechdale to the Abbey House.

After walking home from church with Mrs. Tempest, it was only natural that the captain should stop to luncheon, and after luncheon—Sunday afternoon being, in a manner, a legitimate occasion for dawdling—it was natural enough for him to linger, looking at the gardens and greenhouses, or talking beside the drawing-room fire, till the appearance of the spitfire Queen-Anne teakettle and Mrs. Tempest's infusion of orange pekoe.

Sometimes the Scobels were present at these Sunday luncheons, sometimes not. Violet was with her mother, of course, on these occasions, but, while bodily present, she contrived to maintain an attitude of aloofness which would have driven a less resolute man than Conrad Winstanley to absent himself. A man more sensitive to the opinions of others could hardly have existed in such an atmosphere of dislike; but Captain Winstanley meant to live down Miss Tempest's aversion, or to give her double cause for hating him.

"Why have you given up hunting, Miss Tempest?" he asked one Sunday afternoon, when they had gone the round of the stables, and Arion had been fondled and admired—a horse as gentle as a dog in his stable, as fiery as a wild-cat out of it.

"Because I have no one I care to hunt with, now papa is gone."

"But here in the Forest, where everybody knows you, where you might have as many fathers as the Daughter of the Regiment—"

"Yes, I have many kind friends. But there is not one who could fill my father's place—for an hour."

"It is a pity," said the captain sympathetically. "You were so fond of hunting, were you not?"

"Passionately."

"Then it is a shame you should forego the pleasure. And you must find it very dull, I should think, riding alone in the Forest."

"Alone! I have my horse."

"Surely he does not count as a companion."

"Indeed he does. I wish for no better company than Arion, now papa is gone."

"Violet is so eccentric!" Mrs. Tempest murmured gently.

Captain Winstanley had taken Mrs. Hawbuck's cottage till the first of May. The end of April would see the last of the hunting, so this arrangement seemed natural enough. He hunted in good earnest. There was no pretence about him. It was only the extra knowing ones, the little knot of choice spirits at the Crown, who saw some deeper motive than a mere love of sport for his residence at Beechdale. These advanced minds had contrived to find out all about Captain Winstanley by this time—the date of his selling out, his ostensible and hidden reasons for leaving the army, the amount of his debts, and the general complexion of his character. There was not much to be advanced against him. No dark stories; only a leading notion that he was a man who wanted to improve his fortunes, and would not be over-scrupulous as to the means. But as your over-scrupulous man is one in a thousand, this was ranking Captain Winstanley with the majority.

The winter was over; there were primroses peeping out of the moss and brambles, and a shy little violet shining like a blue eye here and there. The flaunting daffodils were yellow in every glade, and the chestnut buds were beginning to swell. It was mid-March, and as yet there had been no announcement of home-coming from Roderick Vawdrey or the Dovedales. The duke was said to have taken a fancy to the Roman style of fox-hunting; Lady Mabel was studying art; the duchess was suspected of a leaning to Romanism; and Roderick was dancing attendance upon the family generally.

"Why should he not stay there with them?" said Mr. Scobel, sipping his pekoe in a comfortable little circle of gossipers round Mrs. Tempest's gipsy-table. "He has very little else to do with his life. He is a young man utterly without views or purpose. He has no mission. I have sounded him, and found him full of a shallow good-nature. He would build a church if people asked him, and hardly know, when it was finished, whether he meant it for Jews or Gentiles."

Vixen sat in her corner and said nothing. It amused her rather—with a half-bitter sense of amusement—to hear them talk about Roderick. He had quite gone out of her life. It interested her to know what people thought of him in his new world.

"If the duke doesn't bring them all home very soon the duchess will go over," said Mrs. Scobel, with conviction. "She has been drifting that way for ever so long. Ignatius isn't high enough for her."

The Reverend Ignatius sighed. He hardly saw his way to ascending any higher.

It was in this month of March that an event impended which caused a considerable flutter among the dancing population of the Forest. Lord Southminster's eldest daughter, Lady Almira Ringwood, was to marry Sir Ponto Jones, the rich iron-master—an alliance of ancient aristocracy and modern wealth, which was considered one of the grandest achievements of the age, like the discovery of steam or the electric telegraph—and after the marriage, which was to be quietly performed in the presence of about a hundred and fifty blood-relations, there was to be a ball, to which all the county families were bidden, with very little more distinction or favouritism than in the good old fairy-tale times, when the king's herald went through the streets of the city to invite everybody, and only some stray Cinderella, cleaning boots and knives in a back kitchen, found herself unintentionally excluded. Lady Southminster drew the line at county families, naturally, but her kindly feelings allowed a wide margin for parsons, doctors, and military men—and among these last Captain Winstanley received a card.

Mrs. Scobel declared that this ball would be a grand thing for Violet. "You have never properly come out, you know, dear," she said; "but at Southminster you will be seen by everybody, and, as I dare say Lady Ellangowan will take you under her wing, you'll be seen to the best advantage."

"Do you think Lady Ellangowan's wing will make any difference—in me?" enquired Vixen.

"It will make a great deal of difference in the Southminster set," replied Mrs. Scobel, who considered herself an authority upon all social matters.

She was a busy good-natured little woman, the chosen confidante of all her female friends. People were always appealing to her on small social questions, what they ought to do, or to wear on such and such an occasion. She knew the wardrobes of her friends as well as she knew her own. "I suppose you'll wear that lovely pink," she would say when discussing an impending dinner-party. She

gave judicious assistance in the composition of a menu. "My love, everyone has pheasants at this time of year. Ask your poulterer to send you guinea-fowls, they are more distinguished," she would suggest. Or: "If you have dessert ices, let me recommend you coffee-cream. We had it last week at Ellangowan Park."

Vixen made no objection to the Southminster ball. She was young, and fond of waltzing. Whirling easily round to the swing of some German melody, in a great room garlanded with flowers, was a temporary cessation of all earthly care, which was in no wise unpleasant to her. She had enjoyed her waltzes even at that charity ball at the Pavilion, to which she had gone so unwillingly.

The March night was fine, but blustery, when Mrs. Tempest and her daughter started for the Southminster ball. The stars were shining in a windy sky, the tall forest trees were tossing their heads, the brambles were shivering, and a shrill shriek came up out of the woodland every now and then, like a human cry for help.

Mrs. Tempest had offered to take Mrs. Scobel and Captain Winstanley in her roomy carriage. Mr. Scobel was not going to the ball, all such entertainments were an abhorrence to him; but this particular ball, being given in Lent, was more especially abhorrent.

"I shouldn't think of going for my own amusement," Mrs. Scobel told her husband, "but I want to see Violet Tempest at her first local ball. I want to see the impression she makes. I believe she will be the belle of the ball."

"That would mean the belle of South Hants," said the parson. "She has a beautiful face for a painted window—there is such a glow of colour."

"She is absolutely lovely, when she likes," replied his wife; "but she has a curious temper; and there is something very repellent about her when she does not like people. Strange, is it not, that she should not like Captain Winstanley?"

"She would be a very noble girl under more spiritual influences," sighed the Reverend Ignatius. "Her present surroundings are appallingly earthly. Horses, dogs, a table loaded with meat in Lent and Advent, a total ignoring of daily matins and evensong. It is sad to see those we like treading the broad path so blindly. I feel sorry, Juliana, that you should go to this ball."

"It is only on Violet's account," repeated



Mrs. Scobel. "Mrs. Tempest will be thinking of nothing but her dress; there will be nobody interested in that poor girl."

Urged thus, upon purely benevolent grounds, Mr. Scobel could not withhold his consent, more especially as he had acquired the habit of letting his wife do what she liked on most occasions—a marital custom not easily broken through. So Mrs. Scobel, who was an economical little woman, "did up" her silver-grey silk dinner-dress with ten shillings' worth of black tulle and pink rosebuds, and felt she had made a success that Madame Elise might have approved. Her faith in the silver-grey and rosebuds was just a little shaken by her first view of Mrs. Tempest and Violet: the widow in black velvet, rose-point, and scarlet—Spanish as a portrait by Velasquez; Violet in black and gold, with white camellias in her hair.

The drive was a long one, well over ten miles, along one of those splendid straight roads which distinguish the New Forest. Mrs. Tempest and Mrs. Scobel were in high spirits, and prattled agreeably all the way, only giving Captain Winstanley time to get a word in edgeways now and then. Violet looked out of the window and held her peace. There was always a charm for her in that dark silent forest, those waving branches and flitting clouds, those stars gleaming like lights on a stormy sea. She was not much elated at the idea of the ball, and "that small, small, imperceptibly small talk" of her mother's and Mrs. Scobel's, was beyond measure wearisome to her.

"I hope we shall get there after the Ellangowans," said Mrs. Scobel, when they had driven through the little town of Ringwood, and were entering a land of level pastures and fertilising streams, which seemed wonderfully tame after the undulating forest; "it would be so much nicer for Violet to be in the Ellangowan set from the first."

"I beg to state that Miss Tempest has promised me the first waltz," said Captain Winstanley. "I am not going to be ousted by any offshoot of nobility in Lady Ellangowan's set."

"Oh, of course, if Violet has promised—What a lot of carriages! I'm afraid there'll be a block presently."

There was every prospect of such a calamity. A confluence of vehicles had poured into a narrow lane bounded on one side by a treacherous water-meadow, on the other by a garden-wall. They all

came to a standstill, as Mrs. Scobel had prophesied. For a quarter of an hour there was no progress whatever, and a good deal of recrimination among coachmen; and then the rest of the journey had to be done at a walking pace.

The reward was worth the labour, when at the end of a long winding drive the carriage drew up before the Italian front of Southminster House; a white marble portico, long rows of tall windows brilliantly lighted, a vista of flowers, and statues, and lamps, and pictures, and velvet hangings, seen through the open doorway.

"Oh, it is beautiful!" cried Violet, fresh as a schoolgirl in this new delight; "first the dark forest and then a house like this—it is like Fairyland."

"And you are to be the queen of it—my queen!" said Conrad Winstanley in a low voice. "I am to have the first waltz, remember that. If the Prince of Wales were my rival I would not give way."

He detained her hand in his, as she alighted from the carriage. She snatched it from him angrily.

"I have a good mind not to dance at all," she said.

"Why not?"

"It is paying too dearly for the pleasure to be obliged to dance with you."

"In what school did you learn politeness, Miss Tempest?"

"If politeness means civility to people I despise, I have never learnt it," answered Vixen.

There was no time for further skirmishing. He had taken her cloak from her, had handed it to the attendant, and received a ticket; and now they were drifting into the tea-room, where a row of ministering footmen were looking at the guests across a barricade of urns and tea-pots, with countenances that seemed to say: "If you want anything, you must ask for it. We are here under protest, and we very much wonder how our people could ever have invited such rabble!"

"I always feel small in a tea-room when there are only men in attendance," whispered Mrs. Scobel, "they are so haughty. I would sooner ask Gladstone or Disraeli to pour me out a cup of tea than one of those supercilious creatures."

Lady Southminster was stationed in the Teniers room—a small apartment at the beginning of the suite which ended in the picture-gallery, or ball-room. She was



what Joe Gargery called "a fine figure of a woman," in ruby velvet and diamonds, and received her guests with an indiscriminating cordiality which went far to heal the gaping wounds of county politics.

The Ellangowans had arrived, and Lady Ellangowan, who was full of good-nature, was quite ready to take Violet under her wing when Mrs. Scobel suggested that operation.

"I can find her any number of partners," she said. "Oh, there she goes—off already—with Captain Winstanley."

The captain had lost no time in exacting his waltz. It was the third on the programme, and the band were beginning to warm to their work. They were playing a waltz by Offenbach—*Les Traineaux*, with an accompaniment of jingling sleigh-bells—music that had an almost maddening effect on spirits already exhilarated.

The long lofty picture-gallery made a magnificent ball-room—a polished floor of dark wood; a narrow line of light under the projecting cornice; the famous Paul Veronese, the world-renowned Rubens, the adorable Titian—ideal beauty looking down with art's eternal tranquillity upon the whirl of actual life—here a calm Madonna, contemplating, with deep unfathomable eyes, these brief ephemera of a night—there Judith with a white muscular arm holding the tyrant's head aloft above the dancers—yonder Philip of Spain frowning on this Lenten festival.

Violet and Captain Winstanley waltzed in a stern silence. She was vexed with herself for her loss of temper just now. In his breast there was a deeper anger. When would his day come? he asked himself. When would he be able to bow this proud head, to bend this stubborn will? It must be soon; he was tired of playing his submissive part; tired of holding his cards hidden.

They held on to the end of the waltz—the last clash of the sleigh-bells.

"Who's that girl in black and gold?" asked a guardsman of Lady Ellangowan; "those two are the best dancers in the room—it's a thousand to nothing on them."

That final clash of the bells brought the captain and his partner to anchor at the end of the gallery, which opened through an archway into a semicircular palm-house. In the middle of this archway, looking at the dancers, stood a figure at sight of which Violet Tempest's heart gave a great leap, and then stood still.

It was Roderick Vawdrey! He was standing alone, listlessly contemplating the ball-room, with much less life and expression in his face than there was in the pictured faces on the walls.

"That was a very nice waltz, thanks," said Vixen, giving the captain a little curtsy.

"Shall I take you back to Mrs. Tempest?"

Roderick had seen her by this time, and was coming towards her with a singularly grave and distant countenance, she thought; not at all the Rorie of old times. But of course that was over and done with. She must never call him Rorie any more, not even in her own thoughts. A sharp sudden memory thrilled her, as they stood face to face in that brilliant gallery—the memory of their last meeting, in the darkened room on the day of her father's funeral.

"How do you do?" said Roderick, with a gush of originality. "Your mamma is here, I suppose?"

"Haven't you seen her?"

"No; we've only just come."

"We" no doubt meant the Dovedale party, of which Mr. Vawdrey was henceforth a part.

"I did not know you were to be here, or even that you were in England."

"We only came home yesterday, or I should have called at the Abbey House. We have been coming home, or talking about it, for the last three weeks. A few days ago the duchess took it into her head that she ought to be at Lady Almira's wedding—there's some kind of relationship, you know, between the Ashbournes and the Southminsters—so we put on a spurt, and here we are."

"I am very glad," said Vixen, not knowing very well what to say; and then seeing Captain Winstanley standing stiffly at her side, with an aggrieved expression of countenance, she faltered: "I beg your pardon, I don't think you have ever met Mr. Vawdrey. Captain Winstanley—Mr. Vawdrey."

Both gentlemen acknowledged the introduction with the stiffest and chilliest of bows; and then the captain offered Violet his arm, and she, having no excuse for refusing it, submitted quietly to be taken away from her old friend. Roderick made no attempt to detain her.

The change in him could hardly have been more marked, Vixen thought. Yes, the old Rorie—playfellow, scapegoat, friend

of the dear old childish days—was verily dead and gone.

"Shall we go and look at the presents?" asked Captain Winstanley.

"What presents?"

"Lady Almira's wedding presents. They are all laid out in the library. I hear they are very splendid. Everybody is crowding to see them."

"I daresay mamma would like to go, and Mrs. Scobel," suggested Vixen.

"Then we will all go together."

They found the two matrons side by side on a settee, under a lovely girlish head by Grenze. They were both delighted at the idea of seeing the presents. It was something to do. Mrs. Tempest had made up her mind to abjure even square dances this evening. There was something incongruous in widowhood and the Lancers; especially in one's own neighbourhood.

#### A STORY OF THE KAFFIR WARS.

THE Kaffir has few friends, and these not remarkable for judgment; but perhaps they are more, and better, than he deserves. Cruel and treacherous he is in war, brutal and lazy in peace. But, for my own part, I have not quite despaired of the Kaffir since hearing the story I am about to tell. It was related by an officer now high in the colonial service, and the experience of others might be given to show that the main incident is not unparalleled. Be it observed that the Basuto Kaffirs, of whom I write, are neither the bravest nor most hopeful of the Negroid races.

In 1861, if I recollect the date exactly, my friend was stationed near Hebron, then called Schmutsdam, after a storekeeper who had settled there. The usual signs of disaffection had prevailed for some time past. Cattle vanished by wholesale, travellers were robbed in the veldt, and in the towns Kaffirs grew insolent. Most significant of all was the desertion of shepherds and other servants, which is a sure warning of trouble. No dwelling of white man could be found in a day's ride about Schmutsdam, and the trader himself had fled with all he could carry. My friend, whom I will call West, dwelt in his shanty, and guarded such stores as were left. He had five native police under his command, and his duty was to watch for stolen cattle passing, and to keep his

eyes open generally; for in districts remote and thinly peopled, the war-cry is most often raised at the beginning of disturbances. Several times West had heard of one chief or another issuing the summons, but all denied the charge when he rode thither to demand an explanation. The farmers, however, had taken fright, and many had trekked towards civilisation. Others were anxious to "go into laäger," a step which my friend discountenanced as much as he dared; for when the panic-stricken and the reckless get together in these travelling camps, they are pretty sure to make a crisis between them. In short, the frontier was agitated, as it is now.

West's force consisted of a Basuto corporal, two privates of the same tribe, and two Zulus. One morning, before dawn, he was roused by the officer, who stood at his bedside. "You must get up, sir," he said, with an air of respectful command, in his own language.

"What for?" asked West, but half awake. "Is there any news?"

"There is news from my king," said the Basuto, putting down his candle. "When you are dressed, we will talk." He passed out, and West sprang to his feet. He knew what was coming, and snatched at his holsters. The pistols had vanished. Hurriedly equipping himself, for no escape was possible, he went into the outer shed. The five police stood there in line, fully dressed and armed. A bright fire showed the brown faces of the Basutos, very grave and resolute, and the darker features of the Zulus grinning with curiosity.

The corporal stepped forward, saluted, and explained himself in few words.

"My king has raised the war-cry, sir, and his messengers have come to summon us. Your horse is saddled at the door, all your clothes packed, and rations in your saddle-bags. If necessary I would have conducted your honour to Aliwal, but Constables Tonda and Ngundeke will ride with you. They are not my master's servants. Right face! March!"

The men filed out, West after them. Light was just stealing over the misty veldt. Tall white clumps of heath glimmered like spectres; the ant-hills, ponderous and shadowy, seemed huge beasts watching. Nothing higher broke the weary level for miles about. No help lay anywhere.

All the horses stood ready—those of the

captain and the Zulus apart, by a little pile of goods, which West recognised as plunder of Schmut's store. A larger heap lay beside the other horses. The corporal halted his men outside, and they all presented arms, as West got into his saddle. "Constables Tonda and Ngundele, fall out!" cried the Basuto. "Set down your arms, and load your baggage!" The Zulus expeditiously strapped their plunder on their horses, grinning the while in high delight. Then they went to pick up their arms, but the corporal cried, "Mount!" and stepped forward to intercept them.

Up to this, things had gone as smoothly as could be, to the satisfaction of everybody whose approval signified. But this move broke up the harmony of the proceedings. The Zulus saw what was intended, and, quick as thought, one sprang upon the corporal, whilst the other dodged round and seized the firearms. Leaving his comrade to deal with one enemy, Tonda covered the nearest private, and swore to shoot him at a motion. The Basutos stood bewildered, whilst Ngundele threw the stately corporal, and came off laughing. Then he took his carbine, and kept guard while Tonda mounted. They withdrew warily, one leading his comrade's horse, and the other walking backwards, prepared to shoot at the least provocation. But the Basutos kept still, watching them out of sight.

Presently, Ngundele also mounted, and rode after West, the Zulus laughing with vengeful glee over their triumph. It was sheer idiocy in the corporal to suppose that such men would give up their arms whilst they could wag a finger. The dream of a Kaffir's life is to possess a gun. For that treasure only he will fight or work in a cheery spirit. Had West found it necessary to disarm the least dangerous of his men, he would have taken all precautions to master him beforehand. It is characteristic of the Basuto that he took no precautions at all, thinking apparently that his bare command would overawe the proudest, most weapon-loving of all Kaffirs, and make them endure the bitterest humiliation. But it was no new thing for West to learn that negroes in authority understand their own people less than do white men—or forget what knowledge they have, in the pride of a little brief authority.

The Zulus behaved as respectfully as ever towards their captain, riding at a proper distance in the rear, until he called

them up to ask whither they were taking him. "Wherever your honour likes," one answered.

"To Aliwal, then. What shall you do if we meet Basutos?"

"We have their king's password, sir. They won't harm us."

This assurance was comforting, since they could not hope to get through without meeting parties of the enemy. All those servants who yet lingered in farms and villages would be on the march, and to escape their quick eyes, on such ground, was simply impossible. Most of the Basuto lands are veldt, long plains covered with a scanty herbage. Here and there droops a lonely bush of thorns, clothed in grey dust. Miserably barren is the prospect for ten months out of twelve, but the short season of flowers had just begun. The desert bloomed with colours innumerable. Spikes of amaryllis rose from great withered globes, like footballs; garlands of cassia, stars of creeping ice-plant, carpeted the soil. The hot air quivered even now, an hour after sunrise, whilst a long blue shadow still travelled abreast with the horsemen. Light puffs of breeze cut through it from time to time, lifting the dust, and whirling it up in a brown column, which danced over the veldt, rising higher and higher, thicker and faster, until, suddenly as it rose, the gust died away, the moving column dropped, and all that remained was a small heap of sand. All round the antelopes were grazing, tawny springbok, striped from chest to tail, brown blesbok, and grey hartebeest. In 1861 such game could be found in the colony itself as now one must seek hundreds of miles inland. West could see ostriches scurrying from his path, little herds of quagga warily feeding, even perhaps a pair of camelleopards. A thicker cloud of dust in the endless flat would show him where a troop of playful gnu were romping. Nay, he might catch a glimpse of some old lion stealing through the dry water-courses towards its den in the hills. These beasts are extinct; but now, as then, the veldt is alive with common antelopes, and birds, and pretty siricates, and marmots, and many-coloured reptiles. The great paaw-bustard stalks over the flowers; the secretary hunts for snake or lizard; Kaffir cranes or crested mayhens fly overhead on whistling wing. Pretty meercats gallop homeward, or sit watching, like kangaroos, ready at a sign to whisk their tails and

plunge headforemost into the earth. Slow, fierce rattels peer round an anthill, on which the puff-adder suns his bloated carcase. Locusts, scarlet and green, hang lazily on the bush which they will devour at evening when the dew has moistened it. In no country is life so dense as in these unpeopled plains of South Africa.

A day's hard riding would carry West to the nearest settlement, but beasts of burden lose all heart in Cape Colony if deprived of their outspan. They are used to rest at intervals of an hour and a half or so, and three hours is as long as they will go cheerfully. At the first outspan West visited his saddle-bags, and found there an ample ration of biltongue—meat cut in strips and dried. Setting out again, he reached the hills without seeing a warrior. At several Kaffir kraals, passed at a distance, the oxen and horses were gathered in large herds, ready to travel. Troops of naked children mounted guard over them, whilst their mothers packed the skins and pots and household goods which satisfy a Kaffir's luxury. At noon West gained the foot of those blue and misty hills which had bounded his horizon all day. If South African plains are unlike any other scenery, South African mountains are yet more curious to behold. They rise straight from the veldt, huge blocks of naked sandstone, wind-worn and water-worn at top into the semblance of ruined towers. All the range has one equal height, and the broad crowns are smoothed as if with a plane. Along the base lies a heap of rocks fallen from above, amidst which spring a few thorns and flowers. Here and there the barrier parts, and leaves a winding defile, called locally a kloof. Trees are found there, if anywhere, amidst the pebbles and grass, but at the best they are gnarled and prickly shrubs, bearing almost as many nests as leaves. For the numberless birds of South Africa are mightily put to it for building room, and when they find a suitable tree, they cover it with grass until it looks like a ruined haystack.

When West issued from the kloof, he saw the plain beyond alive with Kaffirs on the trek. An advance-guard of some score horsemen halted with alarm at sight of him. Two hundred yards behind, three or four waggons came suddenly to a stand, and woolly heads poked out of the tilt. Several hundred men on horseback followed the waggons, keeping a decent order. Many of these wore European

articles of dress, male or female, plundered from the farms along their route. After the warriors came a crowd of women and children, some mounted on horses or oxen, some afoot; and behind them, as far as one could see for dust, the veldt was thick with cattle, pressed on by galloping drovers, who screamed, and cracked their whips, and shouted in glee.

At the mere glimpse of a white face, terrible confusion rose. The advance-guard galloped back on the main body, throwing their assegais without aim. The women screamed and fled, and those in the waggons tumbled out, one on another. A fat old chief, wearing a Dutch housewife's cappie and her husband's hat on top, threw himself to the ground, and ran for life. Younger chiefs, springing on their horses barebacked, pushed to the front, clearing a way with their assegais. For an instant West ran the greatest danger, but the Zulus pushed before him and shouted the king's password. It was instantly effective, and the fat chief, mounted and reassured, gave orders that the fugitives should be brought up. West had known him long, and many a warm dispute the two had had upon questions of stolen cattle, and such like. But the old chief proved to be a good fellow, and in shaking hands, professed himself delighted that the king had shown mercy. "Ride on quickly," he said, however, "for my young men are mad. Powder has been burnt. The boers of Falkesfontein are gone into laager, under the hills. Tell them as you pass that Bela has not run away. When he has put his cattle and his wives in safety, he will return to warm himself in their camp. If they are there to-morrow night, not a man shall see the dawn."

West promised to give the message, and rode on, the Kaffirs of his acquaintance grinning amicably, and the chiefs shaking hands. But when his Zulus tried to follow, Bela challenged them imperiously. "Who are you?" he cried.

"Servants of King Panda," they answered, in the civis Romanus style. Servants of King Panda were as overbearing in their day as servants of King Cetywayo, his son, in ours. But the Basutos cared little for a monarch who could not reach them.

"Give up your arms, Amazulu!" ordered Bela, and upon his sign half-a-dozen brawny fellows laid hands on the policemen. In vain they pledged their master to deeds of



awful vengeance. The Basutos laughed, for it is a far cry to Zululand, and disarmed them in a twinkling. Then, amidst whoops and laughter, the Zulus were hurried through the crush, and dismissed with a lash of the sjambok.

Suddenly calmed, they rode for an hour, until the last of the cattle had gone panting by. It was the hottest hour of the afternoon, when next the fugitives outspanned. The Zulus sat silent and gloomy, until West called them again to the saddle. Then they rose and took dust in their hands. "Panda is our king," they muttered, "and on his head we swear Bela's life." Throwing up the dust, they mounted, having doomed themselves to death or vengeance. A little beyond the spot, a patrol of boers appeared, who greeted West as a man rescued from the grave. They guided him to the camp, which was held by forty white men, three women, strong of limb and heart, and twenty servants, Kaffir or Hottentot, who could be relied on. The feeble and timorous had left the neighbourhood, and those brave souls who remained had mostly sent away their wives and children. There were arms and ammunition in plenty.

One word is needful in description of a *laäger*. When trouble rises on the frontier, and lonely farms are not safe to dwell in, the men consult, and name a place of rendezvous. Hither they all betake themselves; with such of their goods as they can carry, in the huge Cape waggon; driving before them oxen, horses, even poultry. At the appointed spot the fugitives outspan, ranging their waggons in a circle or an oval. Between the tail of one and the head of another, ox chains, cunningly entwined with ropes and stakes and boulders, complete the defence. And so they wait until the danger passes, or becomes too serious to face, moving the camp as pasture fails; the herds being driven inside the circle on alarm. In such landscapes as I have described, an enemy can scarce approach without giving notice enough, and the *laäger* will sometimes remain "out" for months, whilst its inmates dare not go home, nor are willing to fly.

West gave his message. Upon the one hand it was known that Bela had been summoned to join the king in person, and dared not delay. Some of the more reckless boers patrolling, had met a party of scouts laden with plunder, and had killed several; otherwise, Bela would have marched past. What the garrison had to

fear was a short fierce attack in tremendous numbers. If they could repulse it, as they had reasonably good hope of doing, Bela could not dare renew the attempt, whilst his merciless sovereign waited for him. Upon the other hand, it was more than likely that the Kaffirs would overtake them on the march, if they broke up their camp and tried to withdraw. In a running fight, such assailants would have immense advantage. But the boers were more likely to get help the nearer they approached the Orange, whilst by remaining in *laäger* they were sure of incurring great loss. Much, therefore, could be said on both sides, and at length the question was referred to West. He strongly advised them to await the enemy in their fortification; adding that, when the other party had given way, he would bring help from Aliwal as fast as he could ride. But this proposal caused a furious outcry against the skellum Engländer, as in their passion the boers called him frankly. Was he going to desert them? They had arms for him and his Zulus also. West tried for an instant to show why he disliked fighting even Kaffirs who had acted so generously; but his audience understood no such feelings. They thought and said that the Basutos had behaved like fools, and that the generosity of a Kaffir binds no one. These arguments had no effect, but West was puzzled to reply when the boers asked him how he, an officer of police, could be influenced by personal considerations when two score lives were at stake? So he gave way, and they nominated him captain of the *laäger*. A mounted Hottentot set off at once with a letter asking aid.

For the remainder of that day and the next forenoon, all hands worked to strengthen their defences. The camp was not pitched in a spot quite satisfactory, for, upon one side, the width of a "dam," or pool, alone divided it from the hill-side, where were boulders and shrubs high enough to shelter a crawling enemy; but to go farther off would have been to risk the water supply; and besides, the boers were too indolent to move. At noon on the day following, the cattle were all fetched up, each man told to his post, and the ammunition divided. Towards three o'clock a little cloud of dust rose up, miles away over the veldt. Spreading and thickening it drew nearer, nearer, till blurred figures began to loom through it, and little stars to glitter. At a half-mile's



distance the horizon was veiled in a lurid fog, which curled and puffed below, and streamed like wisps of smoke behind. Gradually it dropped, settling down. First came into sight the uncouth heads, decked with ostrich plumes, and the shoulders gleaming with red paint and perspiration; then the horses, tossing their fronts and pawing; then five hundred black horsemen in a line. Their chiefs stood in the midst consulting; and, presently, a number of the warriors filed off to the right, whilst a smaller body went to the left, and the remainder sat still. The enemy meant to attack on every side at once.

As the squadrons moved off they began to chant their war-song. A negro singing alone makes sport for gods and men, but five hundred of their voices raised together create such martial music as is not heard without a thrill. But the boers were not unused to it, and they began to count guns, observing with relief that the foe had no more than ninety, all sorts included. The Zulus pointed out to West his ex-corporal, riding beside a chief who wore the uniform of a private in the police. The corporal still kept his own, with his rifle. At a given spot half the larger column halted, the remainder still riding towards the hill. At its foot they dismounted, leaving their hobbled horses with a guard, whilst they clambered over the rocks to complete the surround. When that was finished there was a pause. "Why do not the others dismount?" muttered West to his Zulus, who kept by him.

"The Basuto fools mean to fight this war on horseback," said Ngundele; "so the corporal told us."

West saw that if in the open field this new tactic would almost certainly ensure defeat for the Kaffirs, it might have an effect in this case on which the enemy had perhaps not reckoned. There is often peril as great within a laager as without, for cattle frightened or wounded dash this way or that in ponderous masses, seeking escape. This danger, always present, is vastly increased in an attack of mounted men. Their swift advance enables almost all to throw a dart into the enclosure, though they die in the act. West had only time to rush round, ordering every man to creep beneath the waggons, before the cavalry charged. Many fell in the rush, and others rolled over them, but many came up close to the waggons, hurling their assegais the while. A score of wounded oxen set the

rest madly galloping and rushing at every aperture. The chains and barricades held firm, but so tremendous was the impact that huge vehicles rocked again. Ngundele was too slow in leaping on a waggon, and the herd tossed him yards away, swept over him, and trampled his body into shapeless pulp. But the boers could spare no heed for the row behind. The Kaffirs were on them hand to hand, thrusting their assegais amongst the wheels, transfixing any limb exposed. But each shot told, and the horses, dropping as it were in line, prevented near approach. Nor could foes dismount use the new barrier to cover their assault. For squadron after squadron succeeded in the ringing charge, and trampled down the footmen. Assegais rained into the camp, redoubling the panic of the oxen, whose hoofs made thunder on the ground. But the mad attempt to storm a fortified position with cavalry was evidently doomed to fail, and its issue presaged the result of other actions in the war to follow.

Upon the dam-side, where Kaffirs fought with common-sense as well as bravery, they fared not so ill. They crept along, and delivered no random spear. When West snatched an opportunity to run across the circle he found the foe firmly posted on the dam's farther bank, and several gaps in his own line. They lay close, covered by a rock or bush, but from time to time one sprang into sight, the assegai whistled from his hand, a dozen boers fired, and the savage vanished. If all the Kaffirs had attacked in this manner, the fight would have been terrible; but their new pride of horsemanship ruined the Basutos. West summoned a few men who could be spared to reinforce the detachment on this side; then he got out the wounded and the dead, lifting the former into a waggon whose strong sides were most likely to resist the enemy's darts; for the attack elsewhere had ceased awhile, though the Kaffirs showed no sign of withdrawing. They stood round their chiefs, who eagerly discussed the situation. The boers also crept from amongst their waggon-wheels, and assembled to hold council. Few men were wounded, and none killed, whilst scores of the enemy dotted the space all round. But they felt no inclination to triumph, so long as the Kaffirs kept the field. Light began to fail, and in a night attack numbers will tell. It was likely that the supply of assegais was exhausted, but,

in the dark, other weapons would be used. West moved from group to group, listening anxiously to the opinions of these men, almost every one of whom had his story of fight. Knowing well the character which boers gain in their lonely, silent, independent life, he was not surprised to see that they meditated escape. They knew, quite as well as he, the enormous risk. They knew that a proportion of them would surely die, and that the waggons, the oxen, and the property they loved must fall to the enemy. But "every man for himself" is a lesson which their existence daily teaches, and one which no consideration for the sufferings of others can temper.

West spoke to the men with such warning eloquence as he could command; reminded them that Bela dared not stay beyond dawn, and appealed to their pride. But boers are little moved by talk. Then he urged the danger to which they would expose their women; but these, resenting the pity of an Engländer, declared that where the husband went the frow could follow. Barely a dozen backed West in his resolve to hold the läger, and unless all stood all must go. Words ran high, and charges of cowardice passed freely. The boer language is singularly frank, and if Englishmen had said to one another things as rude, bloodshed would have followed. At length the majority, now all assembled, declined further argument, and withdrew, each to secure his valuables and his horse. At the same instant the council of feathered warriors broke up. Their movements could scarcely be seen through the mist and dew which blurred the veldt. West appealed to his remaining Zulu, and that savage left for a moment his comrade's body, climbed upon a waggon-pole, and looked long. "The Basutos are tethering their horses," he said coolly, "and they are spreading to attack us all round."

"Every man to his place!" cried West. "The Kaffirs are on us! For your lives, hurry!"

Those near had heard the Zulu's speech, and the commander's loud voice overawed the rest. Each man sought his post, without more words, lying among the waggon-wheels. For half an hour the silence was broken by no sound except a horse's neigh, the snort of oxen but half reassured, and the mutter of comrades watching the veldt. Pitchy darkness settled over the plain, and even Tonda could not see a movement. Suddenly, in

the deep stillness, a shot and a cry!—then the rattle of firearms, the threatening chorus of the war-song, and the hurtle of assegais made a din infernal. By instinct rather than by sight, West knew that the enemy were concentrating their attack on the weakest point of his defence, an opening through which the cattle had been driven. He ran thither, for the herds kept quiet as yet, standing in a solid mass farthest from the point. He arrived too late. The Basutos, charging in a crowd, had speared every boer at his post, and had stormed the barrier, which they were now demolishing. A throng of naked warriors pulled at the ropes and chains and planks, howling the while, and throwing their darts at random, mad with the hope of carnage. Whilst he fired into the black, dim crowd, a spark of light gleamed on the waggon-tilts at either side; the bearers dropped before his pistols, but others caught up the brand, blew it, and the canvas flamed, ran swiftly up the tilt, and burst in a pyramid of fire as the dry hoops caught. At that signal the enemy ran up on either side, black shadows that hurried past, all yelling and quivering. Many of the boers, seeing their stronghold forced, slipped out into the veldt; but enemies rose in their path, and they dropped, screaming.

"Start the cattle!" cried Tonda, running back, picking up fallen assegais as he went. West caught his idea, and followed. At the farther end of the camp they saw the oxen, wild with fright, pressed together, bellowing and steaming and tossing to and fro. A dozen thrusts of the spear, with the Zulu's savage cries, set them off in one body, a solid phalanx against which regiments could not stand. In their thundering course, a dozen boers were trampled into clay. The Kaffirs, wedged in at the gate, yelled with terror, and those who could sprang aside; but the ponderous mass fell upon those remaining. They went down, vanished, slid out of sight, leaving naught human to testify of their existence. Betwixt the burning waggons where had stood three hundred savages, the stream of cattle passed, wet hides gleaming, horns tossed up, black tongues lolling, and eyes staring. Those Kaffirs who had saved themselves ran after, pursued by bullets and whizzing assegais. They roared as they ran, until all the tumult vanished behind the pall of night. Cries resounded for awhile; then ceased in the distance.

The boers experienced in Kaffir fights knew that the peril was over. They sought their dead by the dying light of the waggons. West looked for his Zulu, but did not find him. Next day a patrol reached the spot, announcing help, and presently came Tonda, with bloodstained hands, and as much loot as he could carry. In a few chance words, West learned that his Zulu had satisfied alike his own vengeance and the manes of his comrade. Bela had paid for robbing a subject of King Panda of his arms—with what awful death no man could tell.

After this affair, the Basuto war ran its course, now historic. Sticking to their cavalry tactics, the Kaffirs were beaten and lost half their territory to the English, whilst the Free State seized the rest. It is said they are moving again, in alliance with the Gaikas and the Tambookies, but as a nation they have ceased to exist.

#### "NO MORE SEA."

AYE, artists come to paint it; and writers, to put in a book,  
How grand in storm, and fair in calm, the old North Sea can look.

I've wondered to hear them talking, how to mimic in music or song,  
The voice that thrills the brooding air with its thunder low and long;

Since never aught but itself, I wot, could sound like its angry roar,  
When its breakers rise to the east winds' call, to crash on the rocky shore.

But rough or smooth, in shade or shine, the face of the mighty main  
Can speak of little else to me, but memory, fear, or pain.

Father and husband, and bold bright boy, it has taken them one by one:  
I shall lie alone in the churchyard there, when my weary days are done.

God never sent me a maiden bairn, to stay by me to the last,  
So I sit by the restless tides alone, by the grave of all my past;

By the waves so strong and pitiless, that have drowned life's joy for me,  
And think of "the land where all shall meet, the land where is no more sea."

Yet I cannot rest in meadow or fell, or the quiet inland lanes,  
Where the great trees spread their rustling arms over the smiling plains.

I can't draw breath in the country, all shadowed, and green, and dumb,  
The want of the sea is at my heart, I hear it calling "Come."

I harken, and rise, and follow; perhaps, my men down there,  
Where the bright shells gleam, and the fishes dart 'mid seaweeds' tangles fair,

Will find me best, if still on earth, when the Angel's trump is blown,  
On the sand reach, or the tall cliff side, ere we pass to the great White Throne.

So summer and winter, all alone, by the breaker's lip I wait,  
Till I see the red light flush the clouds, as He opens the golden gate;

And though at the sound of the rising waves, I oft-times tremble and weep,  
When the air is void of their glorious voice, I can neither rest nor sleep!

And strangest of all the promises, writ in the Book, to me,  
Is how on the shores of Paradise, "there shall be no more sea."

#### A WALK BELOW BRIDGE.

WROTE Mr. James Boswell, on Saturday, April the 12th, 1783, after he and Wyndham had been paying a chatting visit to Johnson: "He, in particular, recommended us to explore Wapping."

In particular, it was excellent recommendation. Boswell and Wyndham caught at it too, resolving that the exploring should be done; in spite of which, nine years and over went by before there came the time and the opportunity. It was October of the year 1792 before the acting on the counsel took place, and then—"whether from that uniformity which has, in modern times, in a great degree, spread through every part of the metropolis, or from our want of sufficient exertion, we were disappointed."

It was not so very extraordinary. Wapping interest, like all other places' interest, depends entirely on the men who arrange to be interested. "Attention to what you will see and hear," says the Earl of Chesterfield, in Letter One Hundred and seventy-five, "together with proper enquiries, and a little care and method in taking notes of what is most material, will procure you much useful knowledge;" and Messrs. Boswell and Wyndham might have taken a personal and salutary lesson from the advice. Some further lesson could have been received also, by the explorers, in addition. "Many people are so light, so dissipated, and so incurious," says his lordship in continuance, "that they can hardly be said to see what they see, or hear what they hear; that is, they hear in so superficial and inattentive a manner, that they might as well not see nor hear at all;" and therein is the point, put very potently, again.

Let us take down some evidence concerning this piece of waterside in respect of Jack Cade, as another "explorer," who *was* attentive, put it. Exclaims Shakespeare's breathless messenger to the king and queen: "Jack Cade hath gotten London

Bridge!" "The citizens fly and forsake their houses!" cries Jack Cade himself in verification. "Up Fish Street! Down St. Magnus Corner! Kill and knock down! Throw them into Thames!" And so it goes on, and so it drives the explorer on, full of it. Every inch of ground brings rich reward for attention; every gleam of water deserves careful noting. Much of it is because it is possible there, as Shakespeare says again, to

Stand upon the rivage, and behold  
A city on the inconstant billows dancing;

to see

Upon the hempen tackle, shipboys climbing;  
Hear the shrill whistle, which doth order give  
To sounds confused: behold the threaden sails  
Borne with the invisible and creeping wind.

Much of it is, also, because it is possible, whilst beholding this, to think of the streets paved with the "ruthless flint that doth cut my tender feet," as Nell, old Humphrey's duchess, walked upon them, and complained of them, in her cruel penance; and because every inch of ground brings in Messrs. Wyndham and Boswell guilty of their self-suggested misdemeanour—want of sufficient exertion; bringing them in, too, standing illustrations of the moral tale, almost contemporary with them, Eyes and no Eyes.

Remaining, moreover, not altogether on the Wapping shore, but getting upon the water, by bridge, by ferry, and stopping upon it, or crossing to the other side, there is much of stir and strong suggestion everywhere. Taking the river itself, threaded hither and thither by a maze of traffic, there was a time once when all persons were prohibited from using, employing, or travelling upon it, on the Lord's Day, with any boat, wherry, lighter, or barge whatever; when it was to be placid and silent, consequently, on Sundays; when nobody was to ply there, row there, paddle there, sail there. It was Charles the Second's enactment, and it was a law that lasted for a long century and a half. And it went on, a compulsorily-kept custom, down to as late as fifty years ago, 1827. During the centuries before the passing of this statute—during the centuries, that is, when Sunday boating had been permitted—there had been peculiar value attached to the money the Sunday boatmen earned. It was a value, however, that had come, in the course of time, to be looked at with some doubt and laxity by some bold and unsuperstitious souls; to hinder which desecration it had been thought imperative

to pass a law, in the first year of the reign of James the First, ordering that if any Sunday ferryman neglected to pay in his Sunday ferry-money to the rulers of the Waterman's Company on the next day, Monday, he should forfeit forty shillings; and, that it was the absolute pieces of coin the ferrymen received that they were intended by this law to hand over, is clearly evident from the further enactment that, if any ruler of the said Company should mix the Sunday ferry-money with the other cash, he should forfeit as large a sum as five pounds. In this same statute of the first year of the reign of James the First, too, there were stringent laws about the watermen "reviling" these rulers of their Company, the auditor, or assistant. If they would revile—to revile meaning to reproach, to taunt, to rail at—they were to forfeit half-a-sovereign; if they would revile one another, or a passenger, the fine was two shillings; cursing and swearing was an altogether distinguishable and separable offence, the penalty for which was two shillings also. A master-waterman or a mistress-waterman—there were such oddities—allowing an apprentice to take charge of a boat before he had been two years bound, was to forfeit ten shillings. Either of them keeping a boy on trial for more than forty days was to forfeit a pound for every week he was kept after. Anyone towing a boat, when carrying a passenger, was fined half-a-crown. Anyone plying westward, and carrying more than ten passengers, was fined half-a-crown. Anyone loosening another's lighter from its proper fast was fined five shillings. Anyone, being a lighterman, who should go partner with a foreigner, forfeited for each lighter he owned, and for each day of the foreign partnership, ten shillings. If a ruler, auditor, clerk, assistant, or beadle, kept a victualling-house he was fined ten shillings a week—a neat little addition of twenty-six pounds per year rent, that, might, in some victualling matters, be quite worth paying. And, to ensure these regulations being well impressed on the watermen and others whom they concerned, if the rulers omitted to read them all over to them twice a year, viz. on the first of March and the first of September, these said rulers were to pay the large forfeit of six pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence.

Of course these rules were not all, or nearly all. There was one amongst the host—and they entered into the minutest



particulars—for the especial behoof of the barges of the nobility. These were not to be “hindered” at the landings. “Make way! make way!” would have been the cry, when satin doublets and Genoa velvets were to be seen approaching the river-steps; and if a waterman refused this civility of makingway, there was his forfeit, half-a-crown. Another rule enacted that the watermen might elect eight of themselves to act as overseers over the others; enacted, also, that, if a waterman made an overcharge, he was to be imprisoned for six months and pay two pounds. Henry the Third gave his consideration to the water-gates, or wharfs. He took Dowgate, and he granted that, if ships rested there, they were to pay customs in the same manner as if they rode at Queenhithe. Not forgetting Queenhithe either in this charter for Dowgate, Henry the Third compelled all the ships of all the Cinque Ports to land their corn there, to the positive prohibition of any other riding-place. Wines were to be landed at The Three Cranes. At the same period, the date being 1236, some French merchants from Amiens, hitherto forbidden to land any goods at all at London, simply for the reason that they were foreigners, were allowed to purchase the right of landing timber, and housing it, on a Thames “kay.” They agreed to give fifty marks a year for this privilege, with a fine, or premium, of a hundred pounds down. And it was worth every groat of the money to them, since, till they had completed their bargain, they had been obliged, like all other foreign merchantmen, to sell their merchandise on board their ships. The legislation of Edward the First extended his care to the river fish. By his ordering, the lamprey caught by the Thames fishermen were to be sold for fourpence apiece; eels were to be twopence a “strike,” i.e. a quarter of a hundred, another quantity of eels, two hundred and fifty, being called a “bind.” If oysters were unshipped in London, and they were the best fresh sort, they were to fetch only half a groat (twopence) for a whole gallon. In reference to which it may just be set down that the fish mentioned by Pennant as being caught at London Bridge only a century ago are eels, quite commonly; roach, dace, bleak in great plenty; small flounders as far up as Fulham; “porpesses” in numbers, “affording an eager diversion to the watermen;” whilst, though the barbel would only keep itself up, delicately, somewhere

about Chelsea, scared by the traffic about the bridge, a species of whale, allied to the dolphin, and twenty-one feet long, had pierced all this traffic in 1783, had swum cleverly under one of the bridge-arches, and had been killed in the silvery waters leading to Vauxhall and Battersea.

Then the rates of the boats rowing about in company with all this “porpess” diversion and eel-potting, for all that they were settled by Philip and Mary under such heavy penalty, were reconsidered by various Acts of Parliament, and were subject, in the course of several reigns, to many changes. Taking the year 1708, Queen Anne occupying the throne, and Harley, and Bolingbroke, and Pope, as well as the Marlboroughs and the Spectators, in nobilities’ barges and other craft, descending to the Thames and using it; some of the charges they would have had to have paid shall be set down. Here is one. If they went from London (that meaning London Bridge), all the way to Deptford, their fare would have been “in oars, one shilling and sixpence, with company, threepence”—the same distance in a century and a quarter, viz. in 1827, being increased by law to four shillings oars, and two shillings a sculler. Here is another: If they went from London only to Limehouse, they would have been charged “a whole fare in oars one shilling, a sculler sixpence;” fares which were trebled in 1827. If they went from London to New Crane Wharf, to Shadwell Dock, to Bell Wharf, to Ratcliff Cross (at each of which places they would have found “commodious” stairs), the fare was the same as if they had taken the farther point of Limehouse. If they went the other way, up into the country, and landed at any of the stairs between London Bridge and Westminster—and there were plenty of them; they stand, in a “plan” of London issued in 1563, Queen Elizabeth, “Styll Yarde, Three Cranes, Queenhyve, Broken Wharf, Tryge Lane, Bass Ally, Baynard’s Castle, Black Fryers, Bridewel;” they stood later, in addition, Goat Stairs, Falcon Stairs, Paris Garden, White Friars, Old Bargehouse, Temple, Essex, Arandel, Surrey, Salisbury, Whitehall, with deer browsing in the “cut” of Old Whitehall preserved by Pennant—the fare was in oars sixpence to any one, a sculler threepence. If they went from London to Brentford, Isleworth, or Richmond, along the plashy margins of Chelsea Reach, by the Fulham Town Meadows, and up by



Crab Tree Point and other bends and stopping-places, known to modern boat-racing London, the fare for the whole of the distance was, in oars three shillings and sixpence, with a modest charge for company of sixpence more. Extending this long pull, too, to the farthest up-country limit to which the watermen's jurisdiction goes, to Windsor, it was all to be pulled, or paddled, and struggled through for the sum of fourteen shillings, with a couple of shillings extra for extra company. No picture of old Thames being complete without the emblematic tilt-boat, making its slow and easy voyages from the seaward limit of the watermen's jurisdiction, Yantlet Creek at Gravesend, up to the various wharves all along by London Bridge as far as Westminster, there must be a short hint here as to the charges such a boat was allowed. A passenger went the whole distance for sixpence; if he had an ordinary chest or trunk with him, it was sixpence more; if he and a whole party, having an accumulation of baggage or a few cottages-full of furniture for moving, thought well to club together and hire the whole boat, making a lengthy day of it, and perhaps a night as well, the charge permitted was only a sovereign and half-a-crown. It was for carrying goods, however, that the tilt-boat was most in employ. Kentish butter, Kentish cheeses, Kentish ale, Kentish salt, Kentish corn, and many other matters, were carried down to Yantlet Creek for shipping in constant abundance. If such a commodity were in a firkin, the tilt-boat's charge for it was twopence, if in a half-firkin a penny, if in a hogshead two shillings, if in a sack sixpence, if "heaved" on board without covering (as iron might be), fourpence for every hundredweight of it. A tilt-boat was only a water-waggon, in fact, plodding along the Thames's surface as a wheeled waggon would have plodded along the lanes and roads. The "tilt" was the awning stretched over the rounded ribs of the boat-top, to keep the passengers and the finer baggage dry; the tilt of the waggon was for the same purpose exactly. But water conveyance was the winner in cheapness in the tilt-boat's time, and, for all that Kent wheat and other grain, when landed at Queenhithe—as Henry the Third said it must be—or when landed, later, at any other hithe, had to pay the proper dues for landing, it was much to the advantage of London trade to have land journeying as short as possible, and to have goods

brought down for shipment to the lighters or the tilt-boats waiting at the water-side.

There is a captivating little picture, by Steele, of this London boat-traffic—half-cargo, half-passenger. "I lay one night last week at Richmond," he says, writing on August the 11th, 1712; "I rose at four in the morning, and took boat for London." The little jaunt cost him three-and-sixpence. That is known from what has been shown before. It is not foreign to the colours of this sketch either to read—in further confirmation of Boswell and Wyndham—that "the Thames itself, loaded with the product of each shore, added very much to the landscape." What is new and appropriate matter is that "when we first put off from shore, we soon fell in with a fleet of gardeners, bound for the several market-ports of London;" that "we put in at Nine Elms, and took in melons, consigned by Mr. Cuffe, of that place, to Sarah Sewell and Company, at their stall in Covent Garden;" that "we landed at Strand Bridge at six of the clock"—so the boating was effected in two hours, spite of the stoppages—"with ten sail of apricot-boats." That shows the busy roadway the Thames was in the matter of supplying London with fruit and vegetables.

Then there is another captivating picture, of passengers—as companion. It was painted half a century later, in 1763, and it begins: "On Saturday, July 30, Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple Stairs, and set out for Greenwich. Dr. Johnson and I were rowed by a boy, who pleased Johnson so much he had a double fare given to him." (By law this was threepence.) Johnson had said: "My lad, what would you give to know about the Argonauts?" and the boy had said: "Sir, I would give what I have;" but the friends had had to leave the lad at the Old Swan Stairs—without the relation of the fine old Greek tale, no doubt—the river regulations only allowing him a certain tether. And then they walked the short distance of the waterside to Billingsgate, "where we took oars, and moved smoothly along the silver Thames." As they went they were "entertained with the beautiful country on each side of the river." And there is the feature to which it is proper to draw attention. It would be charming to linger over the moment when the friends set foot at Greenwich, and when Boswell pulled Johnson's poem

of London out of his pocket, and read "aloud with enthusiasm:"

On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood,  
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:  
Pleased with the seat that gave Eliza birth,  
We kneel and kiss the consecrated earth.

It would be charming, also, to linger over the moment when the friends were sailing up the river to return, and when the night air was blowing so cold that it made Boswell shiver, and made Johnson scold, and cry: "Why do you shiver?" as if Boswell's action "had been a paltry effeminacy." But the "beautiful country on each side of the river," between Billingsgate and Greenwich, is the point for examination, and it must be kept to. Where is the sculler-lad who must stop short of it at Old Swan Stairs now? Where are the oarsmen who can successfully row by it, "entertaining" robust philosophers and effeminate biographers? Who can think of the silver flood, or the diverting porpoises, or the Amiens merchants lowering their Picardy timber, or of the strike of eels for twopence, or of the Cinque Port grain-dealers steering for Queenhithe, or of any other of the small gleaming of matters collected together in this sketch, and think, at the same time, that it is the same Thames which we see from boat and bridge to-day, the same channel, the same shore?

Begin at the Surrey side, keeping on the low flat shore, treading from the very shadow of the overhanging bridge, and going on, and on, Kent-ways—the water ever lapping and moving a few paces off, visible, now by a glance, now by a broader stretch, from the open mouthpiece of a quiet wharf—and what is there? That mighty network of higher London traffic; that giant puzzle of intersecting road and steam-work, lifted on huge columns that join street to street with breadth, and solidity, and sturdiness—the very hint, as it were, of how Titans would rear a double-galleried city—and then, there is no more of this; the noise of it, and the bewilderment and awe of it, are left behind, and there is entrance on a quieter, a statelier, a more reserved and reposeful scene. It is the region of lofty and costly warehouses; it is the region of those vast storing-palaces, founded low down beneath the roadway, lifting high up towards the sky; rising storey, and storey, and storey again; flat, shaved, slightly—though with no beauty, and no thought of giving place to it—a marvel of strength of construction; a triumph of the

comprehension of requirements, and of the use, to meet them, of the science of organisation or adaptability.

Passing through a narrow double row of these; with light iron bridges, very high up, thrown into it, and there across joining them; and everything is still, sober, with seldom a footfall anywhere, with no sign of home-life. Passing on still, there may be, perhaps, a waggon drawn up in some convenient corner; there may be a quartet of docile horses yoked to it, with a slowly swaying sack being softly slid into it, and then there comes a hint of imports and exports, a little farther along. The narrow road—Peacock Alley, to give it individuality—is made narrower by upright files of casks filled with Newfoundland oil. Casks in the groups next to these hold beer; next still, salt, with great masses of it strewn here and there as samples, and for testing. Then an open doorway, lighted through with a flash of light that is the river, reveals some fairy stacking, it might be, of walls of white tight sacks of flour, double walls of them, leaving walking-way between to the right, to the left, and on; and wall-way again, up a great sack-building or flour-town. A neighbouring open doorway, free for anyone's entrance or occupation—abandoned apparently, at any rate for a time—leads on to a low wide wharf, dark-stained with wear, and weed, and water, and windy weather. It discloses a curious little bit of waterside life and preparation. As it is literally a wharf, with no rail or coping to keep owners or trespassers from toppling sheer over into the river, there are ropes hanging up, and life-belts, and drags. The buffer-bags (fenders), to put between boat and boat are here too; and cranes; and short lorries on wheels, for moving sacks; and coils of rusty chains; and funny little box-offices, at odd places, as weather-begrimed as the rest; and ladders; and great blocks of sea-borne looking cases; and blackboards fastened against the wall, bearing hieroglyphic chalk characters, that might be music staves stood sideways, with bar-marks upside down. Another wharf, a few buildings on again, is heaped high up with hard dry skins; is scattered about with hard dry horns; has a nest of hard dry sheepfolds for ready penning in a handy nook; is ornamented with printed posters telling of conditions of sale; is surrounded on its three land-sides by a timber gallery, is brightened and

beautified by a broad full view of the facing Tower—"my doleful prison this sixth of May," as Anne Boleyn wrote in 1536, shuddering under "your unprincely and cruel usage of me." Going farther again, there are wharves, or offices, or store-houses, with their doors shut, with rigid notices affixed: "No Admittance;" "No Smoking; No Lucifer Matches;" there are parish stairs crushed between lofty buildings, a mere slit of ingress and egress, and guarded, therefore, jealously, with a printed board setting the space out to be parish property, and that it is, by law, to measure so many feet and so many inches, absolutely. There are open yard-gates again, open for invitation, with the further invitation in the words chalked up: "On show, dry brined and dry salted hides, buffalo hides;" or perhaps: "China hides, kangaroo skins, bark." There is another set of parish stairs: "A boat is here all night," it says, in chalk capitals on the flat pavement; there is a peep of ordinary poor life in a few streets of cheap shops and lodgings, that push themselves straight down into the very midst of the merchandise and the shipping, with a short stoned court among them, and boys in it practising the Arab trick of wheeling on head and hand. Then there is a recurrence to the seclusion, and the stateliness, and solidity again; with the warehouses almost overtopping; with the air scented with malt, with skins, with other smells that are evidence of what is going on; with the silence broken, too, by an occasional clatter and deep "Whoa, back!"—by the sound of nailing-up casks, or beating the hoops of them, with the thought suddenly that the whole range of everything is coming bodily down, because a mighty cr—r—r—rrr is madly coming, that proves to be only an empty lorry being barrowed across the loud and oblong stones.

It is a wonder, this river-district, as it trends out and out of Surrey, and approaches Kent. There are low little bulging timber-houses to be soon seen; boatside dwelling-places for boatside men, wherein they can still exercise tarring and "shivering," and belaying, and some rat-catching, surely, and be quite at home. In one of these there is a small home-manufacture of bundles of firewood going on, visible to anyone who may look through the knee-high panes. In others that are a little better off, there are the geraniums, and the musks, and flowering fuchsias pressed flat against the glass, and backed by knitted

window-curtains, that are the stock parlour decorations of English cottage homes. In others again, there are the glass-shaded bouquets of shell-flowers, the models of Chinese pagodas, three or four alike, in three or four cottages within a stone's throw, brought by some sailor Jacks from their voyages, and brought to match, so as not to be outdone. Ending them up, there is a wooden hostelry, The Prince of Orange, queer, quaint, delightful; just as it might have been when it had its naming, the time that the Prince of Orange came. Leaving these behind, there are other parish stairs; wide these, with some grit and gravel, with some pleasant pour of sunlight, with sailors landing and sailors going away in boats, with a little sailor's daughter aping Mrs. Partington, and trying to sweep the tide away with a rose-pink buy-a-broom. There a handbill, offering a pound reward for the body of a poor drowned bargeman in pilot-jacket and guernsey, lost by falling overboard in Hanover Hole. There is a less grisly notice, that twelve well-built river craft of various tonnage are for sale: that the Arthur may be bought, a decked tug of fifteen tons; that the Jennie, an open barge, is disposable; and also the Fanny, only half-decked. There is a third notice, pleasanter still, about a boat-race to be rowed from Mill Lane Stairs for coat silver badge and freedom, and a money prize. Suggestive again, there is a proper place assigned to a hanging cluster of the Humane Society's drags; and, still with plenty of suggestiveness, there are shops for the sale of ship's bread, ship's furniture, sail-cloth, sacks, tarpaulins (which may be hired, even, if that suits pockets and profits better), masts, oars, blocks, pumps; there are forges where crane-work and ships' smithing are done in all their branches; where anchors may be forged at first, or may be beaten back into proper shapeliness, if too rough hauling or grappling has struck them lame. Taking other sights and sounds, too, just as they strike the eye and ear, or seem best worthy of recollection, there is the sudden pre-eminence and predominance of a vast, and very vast mill for the grinding, or husking, or otherwise rendering salutary or saleable, fresh-imported rice. There is, in a shy and hoary stable-yard, an old decorated leaden water-chest, or cistern, dated 1715, with Father Neptune chiselled on it, and a signature P. struck above the lower letters T. and H. There is, with the charm of

unexpectedness, a pretty old-world house, a Virginia-creeper growing over it, its side rooms nearly hidden with ivy, its neat rails and country-roadside-looking garden-gate made more countrified, or rural, by new green paint. There is, better still than this, with greater charm of unexpectedness, its wide back and garden against the river, its fair old face smiling out upon the road, a splendid Jacobean mansion; a vine luxuriant all about it, jessamine making it fragrant, flower-beds and tall white stone vases set out before its arched and pillared window-settings, its heavily-beaded and panelled door. There is, contrasting with this, that most modern of modern river wonders, only two years old, the Thames Steam Ferry—a craft capacious enough to hold a market-placeful of vehicles, be they with one horse, with two horses, with four; a craft, to be on a level with which a huge landing-stage, twice as hugely capacious as itself, is lowered, vehicles, loads, horses, drivers, foot-passengers, and all, that all may pass on board of her as on a road, to be transferred to a twin landing-stage on the opposite shore, and there be raised, by similar giant-power, once more on to the macadam, into wheel-transport and rapid traffic and roar. Would a trip be pleasant in this monster ferry, just for the amusement of the trial? It is of the most easy execution. It is only to turn on to the well-swept and empty landing-stage, thinking it a convenient lounge, and the best adapted spot for a wide view of the facing Wapping shore. It is only to take the view, and to find, when it is taken, the courtyard filling with a cart, two waggons, some trucks, a barrow, a group of led-horses, a small crowd of people upon foot. It is only to feel the whole of this sinking down, and down, and down, bodily, to the dark surface of the river; to feel the foothold—the world, it might be—going, going, slowly, but grimly surely; to see the monster craft looming, and then approaching, with a fresh large store of carts, and waggons, and trucks, and men; and to feel comfortable again, when the newly-arrived cargo rattles safely ashore; when the other, at one's side, clatters along into the place of it; when the monster craft, reloaded, puts off, and a turn of the steam-engines sends all successfully afloat.

Being back again from this small episode, there is plenty of interest again in

coming upon Seven-Step Alley, Clark's Orchard, Charlotte Row, Essex Place, Randell's Rents, Miss Steer's Buildings—some of them regular village cottages, with scarlet-rannars, very one-sided porches, and colonies of cocks and hens; some of them crescent-built and squeezed town tenements, frowningly close to one another, and cruelly short of light and air. It is abundantly interesting to come upon King and Queen Stairs, upon Dog and Duck Stairs, upon Elephant Stairs, upon Morris's Slipway, upon Pitcher's Point, upon Horse Ferry, upon the Shepherd and Dog Stairs, upon the Pageant Stairs; some of them deterring and narrow passages as before, with, nevertheless, a swarm of pink young backs to be just seen from them far down, now lost, now come again, bathing; some of them merely named after owners who once rented them for landing; one of them decorated with a tree-bough on a pole, as ready notice it was the spot to begin a match; another fortified with iron gates to slide in a groove—for all the "way" could not have measured four feet—and be brought out at high-tide to keep out the flood; another fair, and wide, and inviting, with upturned boats to sit on, with a well-tarred hut for a chatty ferryman, with kegs about, and pitch-barrels, and driven straw, and guernseyed boatmen; with the splash of the river; with quite a small "sou'-wester" blowing, to form the topic for feigned weather-wisdom and other clever observations of nautical flavour and kind.

The interest never once flags as the walk goes on. Some of it comes from the marks of where there really was a flood—it is a square block of picturesque poor houses, forty of them, fifty of them, battered, shattered, moss-grown, falling, and left there to crumble and fall more, deserted, except for some dozen adventurous squatters, who persist in inhabiting them; and for all that, the waters that did the ruin only burst in and swept down some two years ago. Some of it comes from the quiet paling and grassy graves of Rotherhithe Church; some from the wide dark avenue leading to another churchyard, with weeds let to grow far too luxuriantly, and much pruning wanted to the too-overhanging trees. Some of the interest, again, is from great ships, reared right across the street, their high prows and rigging almost a-peep in at the top windows of the little houses, as they are being built or repaired in some close dry basin. Some



of it is from the intersecting mouths and passages of the vast Commercial Docks; where drawbridges may hinder foot-passengers as much as, but not more than, twenty minutes, while twenty minutes' worth of brigs, and boats, and barges are floating in; where dockmen, chafing at the hindrance (it is dinner-hour, mayhap), and chaffing in their triumph when the hindrance is overcome, overcome it by a leap into the passing boat, and a leap up again on the other side, and then turn round with a "Now then, skipper," to the driver of a tiny donkey-cart, taunting him that he cannot leap as they do. Some of it is from the sunny seemly look of a row of dwellings, The Seven Houses, ripe brown in the bricks that built them; in good order, and of good style. Some of it is from watersideness again—sail-lofts; little ships' models; small steamboat-piers (with the money-takers changing their coppers, as soon as they get column heaps of them, for silver, to the bar-boys of the timber beershops in the little streets near); ship announcements; ships' provender; more docks; more boat-building; brass-plates on private doors, engraved Mr. Somesuch, Pilot; sailors' almanacs, and for the coming year too, so that, if Jack is going a world-round voyage, he may know what day of the month it is when he is gleefully coming home. Some of it is from the names of the places close at hand: Esmeralda Street, Medway Place, Trundley's Lane, Lemon Valley, Helena Gardens, Plough Road, Blackhorse Field, Woodpecker Alley, Rees Row, Coldblow Farm. Some of it is from what these places prove to be when they must be turned to, and the waterside be left; when there is Windmill Lane, for instance, with Uksley Cottage in it, and Prospect Place, and a climb of passion-flower and trellis porticoes, and neat-trimmed yews, and hideous flint stones (that might be magnified and fossilised walnuts, shelled), for garden edging; when there is the wet and washy enclosure of some whitening works, soaking and grinding on the bank of a low canal; when there is the oddest little toy cottage, some abandoned fair-caravan, perhaps, or sea-coast bathing-machine brought up here to dry, nestling, as it is, under an inflated gasometer, and hiding itself still more by overrunning convolvuluses and sweet-peas; when there is a wide and refreshing slope of low loamy market-garden, sweet and beautiful with patches of purple cabbages, of crimson rhubarb, of swelling

lettuces, of lemon thyme, of sage, and endive, when—

But it is enough. It must be done. There shall only be put now, for ending, a few of Sir John Denham's words apostrophising the Thames, as he, like others, looked upon it, and at last was obliged to go.

Oh could I flow like thee, and make thy stream  
My great example, as it is my theme!  
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;  
Strong, without rage, without o'erflowing full.

## ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," "GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE,"  
&c. &c.

### CHAPTER XXIII. "OUT OF PAIN."

"I DON'T think," said Sir Wilfrid, speaking with great fire and earnestness, "that you can be surprised; I think you must know there must be something to tell you; that I love you; that I have loved you from the first; that the whole of my life is changed; that I have only one hope, one wish in all the world—to win you. I did not mean, I did not think I should have dared to say this yet; but I got the chance, and I have said it."

All that she feared had come upon Janet. Sir Wilfrid had spoken with great rapidity, and she had stood quite still. At the last quick words, Janet put her hands before her face. Her heart was beating painfully, there was a ringing sound in her ears, and her limbs grew heavy. She had never fainted in her life, but she thought this must be very like fainting. After a moment she pointed to a garden-bench near, and Sir Wilfrid, exceedingly frightened by her paleness and silence, led her to it, with many incoherent apologies, and much blaming of himself.

Sir Wilfrid Esdaile had a good deal less vanity than most men possess, and just then was full of the humility and apprehension of a deep and true love, experienced for the first time in his life, and totally unlike anything which he had ever imagined the sentiment to be. He did not know how to account for Janet's agitation; but neither did he interpret it favourably to himself and his cause. In the face which she now turned on him, as with a strong effort she rallied from her sudden faintness, there was pain and regret, but there was very little embarrassment; and when

he begged her to pardon his abruptness, and called himself, with lavish iteration, an idiot and a fool for having startled her thus, she said with tears, that it "was not that."

"Then what is it?" he asked. "You cannot be, you are not angry with me. You will answer me, Miss Monroe—Janet—you will tell me, is there any hope for me? I am not such a fool as to think you could be easily won, or that you could care much for me yet, but I will try, I will try very hard, to be just a little worthy of so great a treasure, if you will trust me with your happiness, with yourself. I think I should be a good man, if you would be my wife; and I know that no man living could love you better than I do. You are the only woman I have ever even imagined that I loved, and my life would be valueless to me henceforth without you."

There was something in the force and simplicity of his appeal which touched Janet very keenly. She knew at that moment, at least, that she would have loved this man if she could. But that was altogether impossible, and she was sorry for him with all the heart that she could not give him. Her mind was in a whirl; but this at least was distinct in it, that she was sorry for him, and for another; that a great ruin had come upon much peace and fair-seeming. It was only a few seconds that the silence lasted, but Sir Wilfrid "feared his fate too much" to misinterpret it. He knew she was going to refuse him. He was standing at the end of the garden bench, his head bent towards her; while he spoke, her downcast eyes were hidden from him, but, after the brief pause, she raised them to his face, with the same look of ineffable truth and gentleness that had struck him when he saw her first. The same; no deeper light of love was in it, no happy shrinking from the light of love in his.

"I wish," she said—"I wish you had not said—that you did not feel—oh Sir Wilfrid! I am so very sorry—but—this cannot be."

"Don't say that, don't tell me that." He seated himself by her side and caught her hands in his. She did not withdraw them.

"I know," he went on rapidly, "that you do not know much of me, that I have spoken too soon; and I never could tell you how strongly I feel that I don't deserve you, that no man ever could; but I implore you not to send me away from

you quite hopeless. Don't do that, don't do that! Let me try for the prize of your love, give me time—the prayer of all the condemned is my prayer to you. I love you, Janet—I love you with so great and true a love that there must be some chance for me. I cannot believe that there is none. You have been so good, so sweet to me, and you are so boundlessly, so unspeakably dear. I don't mean to say," he added, with a quick interpretation of something in her face, and trying to prevent her from speaking, "that I ever had the least right to think you cared for me—you would have been just as good and as sweet to Dunstan or anybody else—but you don't blame me for trying, do you? And you will not send me quite away?"

"No," she said, "not quite away. Let me speak to you now, as frankly as you have spoken. You do not know how sorry I am, how little I ever dreamed of this."

"Who but yourself would have believed that I could see you as I have seen you, what I have seen of you, and not love you? Don't think that I only admire you, for although I did not know that there was such beauty in the world as there is in your face, it is a great deal more than that. You are like an angel or a saint to me, and also the fairest of women. All my fate, all my future, are in your hands."

"Not so," said Janet gravely, and gently loosing herself from his hold; "no one's fate, no one's future, can ever be in the keeping of another; and yours I trust will be bright and happy, though I cannot be your wife. Stay! Pray let me tell how deeply I feel the honour you do me by the wish—"

"That's the old story," said he bitterly; "that is the correct thing that young ladies were supposed to say in the good books. You might say something different, I think, and truer."

"Nothing could be truer. You do honour me, and I do feel it."

"I do not honour you; nobody could offer you a heart and hand worthy of your acceptance; and you only feel vexed with me, but are too kind to show it, and perhaps a little sorry."

"Much more than a little; if I am to blame—"

"You are not to blame, except for being so good and so beautiful. I am a dull fellow, and I daresay I plead my cause awkwardly; but I am telling you the exact truth when I tell you that all my life is in your hands. Surely you believe me? Say that you believe me!"

"I believe you, Sir Wilfrid, indeed, I do, but you distress me infinitely. I don't know how to beg of you to say no more—so that—you shall know that I am grateful——"

"Grateful! You grateful to me, and because I love you! Would it be possible for you to conceive the absurdity of what you are saying? I distress you! I would not do that, heaven knows! And why should you be distressed by knowing the truth? I ought to have concealed it longer, in the interests of my chance, perhaps, but I couldn't. Don't say that I distress you, and give me a little hope?"

His voice was broken, and all the smooth careless prosperity, the "surface look," which rendered Sir Wilfrid so much less interesting in appearance than Edward Dunstan, was crushed out of his face by his intense anxiety.

"I cannot, I cannot."

"And why? At least tell me why?"

"Because—because I could not return the feeling you have for me," said Janet, speaking faintly, and again feeling the painful beating of her heart, and the ringing sound in her ears; "I have the greatest esteem and regard for you——"

"That is like the 'gratitude' you talked of just now! What are esteem and regard to a man who wants love?"

"You have answered your own question, Sir Wilfrid. They are nothing, and therefore I cannot give you the hope you ask me for."

"Don't say that," he exclaimed eagerly. "I am a fool! I have blundered again! How could I say that esteem and regard from you are nothing! They are much, they are everything almost, for they are at least sure foundations for another feeling, for the feeling I want; which may come in time. You do not love me now—I did not think, I did not dare to hope that you loved me; but I will hope for the future; don't say I must not, say that you will go on liking me, and that you will let me pass my life in trying to turn that liking into love. I have read that those marriages are the happiest"—poor Sir Wilfrid went on, with a forlorn attempt at self-encouragement—"in which there is more love on the husband's side than on the wife's, and I daresay it is very true. I will love you, Janet, as well as the truest lover that ever was in a book or in the world, and prize you as highly as ever a woman was prized, if you will be my wife. You shall do anything you like, I will live anywhere you like;

I don't want, I don't care about anything in the world, except the winning you. I will wait any time, and never worry you about it, if you will only say that some day or other I shall succeed. For Heaven's sake don't cry because I am begging my life at your hands; and don't turn your face away from me with that sorrowful look in it. No, you shall not speak until I have said this. You are the most unselfish of women; and I offer you a man's whole life to rule and govern: won't you take it, and do him good all his days? I think, I believe, I could make your life a happy one; I know that mine would be too blest if you would listen to me."

"That would be doing you evil instead of good," said Janet, "believe me. I am only a girl, and I know nothing of the world; but there is nothing I am more sure of than that a woman can do a man no greater wrong than to marry him if she does not love him. I could not do you that wrong, Sir Wilfrid; I cannot be your wife."

"But you do like me—and you might come to love me, if you would only try."

This was surely the simplest form in which a lover ever urged a suit which was rapidly approaching the condition of a forlorn hope; but Sir Wilfrid's earnestness made it pathetic; and the sterling honesty that was in Janet answered to the homely appeal."

"Sir Wilfrid," she said, "I cannot try."

And then, as he received her words in silence, she rose, and adding, "Let us speak of this no more," made a few steps away from the bench. Sir Wilfrid was by her side in an instant.

"You ask the impossible," he said hurriedly; "I cannot part with you thus. I would not offend you for the world and I cannot think you will be offended, if I say that you have have said too much or not enough. You have given me the right to believe that you like me as a friend——"

"As a friend," she repeated.

"And I prize that right very highly; but you could scarcely have even so much regard as that for me, really, and yet make up your mind coldly and deliberately that you cannot try to love me, unless—unless there is some other reason. Dearest Janet—for you will always be dearest to me, whatever may happen—do not leave me in wretched suspense. For the second time I ask you to put me out of pain; this time to trust me. You cannot even try to love me, you tell me. Is it because

some other man has been more fortunate than I?"

Perhaps he had no right to ask her this question, but, if so, Janet would not resent the asking of it. There was such an entire absence of conceit or ill-temper about him, and also such real and profound grief.

They had walked on a few paces before she spoke.

"Will you not tell me?" he urged. "I think you might trust me a little, when you are hitting me so hard."

"No other man," she said at length, "is what you call 'more fortunate.' I am not engaged."

"But there is some other man whom you love!"

She made no answer, but walked more quickly and with her face averted from him.

"Ah!—I see. There ends my dream and my hope. You will never change, nor shall I. I hope you are not angry with me for wanting to find this out."

"Oh no, no!"

"I could not help it; no one could be expected to give up such a woman as you are, if she did not quite hate him, while there was a chance for him. 'While there's life there's hope,' they say; but there's neither life nor hope for me in this, now that I know. Well, I must bear it; but I shall always love you, and always believe the man you love to be the most enviable in the world."

"We shall still be friends?"

"Shall we? I don't know." There came a sudden remembrance to him of the scorn and bitterness with which Dunstan had commented on Laura Thornton's proposal to him that he and she should be "friends," and he too felt for a moment a somewhat similar wrath and impatience. These women, who had the making or the marring of men's lives in their hands, what did they understand of their feelings or ways of thinking?

"I hope so," said Janet gently, "I have so few friends. And, Sir Wilfrid, I am not happier than you."

"I think you must be. No one could be more unhappy than you have made me. And yet, no, I have no right to say that; it is my own folly after all. Let me tell you how it was that I so deceived myself; how it was that it never occurred to me that you could have cared for anyone. They had told me about you, though only a little—Mrs. Cathcart and Dunstan, I mean—about your having come from Bury House to Mrs. Drummond, and I knew

from Dunstan already how lonely the life at Bevis was in her time; that she was quite a recluse, and you were, of course, the same. I had never heard the name of any man mentioned as a visitor at Bevis, and there certainly was nothing in your manner— However, what is the use of my going over all this. It is enough that I never thought of such a thing. Forgive me, if it has been painful to you to let me know it; it has been much more merciful to me. I cannot bear it very well, as yet; but I will try."

"Sir Wilfrid," said Janet with great earnestness, "I am not insensible to the generosity of all you say; though I am quite unable to express what I feel. Would you mind—would you think it unkind if I asked you to leave me, for to-day? I do not feel well, and Miss Ainslie will soon return. I want to be alone for awhile. We shall meet to-morrow."

"But not like this. To-morrow I must look and talk as if you were no more than others to me; I shall not be able to speak to you, even to tell you how wretched you have made me."

"It is better so, indeed it is. We should both be more unhappy than we are if it were otherwise. Let me leave you now, you had better stay; I will go into the house. Good-bye."

She turned into a side-walk of the shrubbery, and was out of sight in a moment, leaving Sir Wilfrid full of the grief and bitterness of his disappointment, but conscious also that she was looking extremely ill. He had never before seen her moved from the gentle composure which rendered her presence soothing to those even who never thought of recognising or accounting for its influence; and, though she was beautiful to his eyes in every mood, he could not but see how much she suffered from agitation, how the intensity and depth of her nature came out, and her feelings told upon her.

He had no mind to enter the house again, to encounter Mr. Ainslie possibly, but Mrs. Ainslie certainly, for the short afternoon was closing in, and Mrs. Ainslie managed to get as far as the drawing-room every day at about that hour, after innumerable precautions, in the way of stopping ventilation and smothering her with wraps, had been taken. He was acquainted with a short cut to the high-road by way of the farmyard, and he went away by that route, carrying with him a heavier heart than had ever sunk within his breast before.



It did seem hard; that anyone must have conceded to the poor fellow, with whom life had hitherto gone so very smoothly that he was to be excused for his limited comprehension of its possibilities of ill to himself and to other people. It did seem hard that he could not have his heart's desire in this one respect. He was not given to over-estimating his own advantages, or indeed to thinking at all about them, but as he walked on, with the irregular pace of a man whose thoughts are full of trouble, and with his eyes unobservant of external things, he could not but dwell upon the irony of fate that had rendered the good gifts of wealth, position, love, home, all that he had to offer, quite barren, while she who refused them possessed none of these things. The loneliness of Janet Monroe's lot in life was the first circumstance concerning her that had made any impression upon him. To what a bright and happy home-life he would have changed that loneliness, if she would have let him do so! And now—what was he to do with his own life? His thoughts ran entirely in the past tense; he did not deceive himself—he knew there was no hope for him. Janet loved another man, and the steadfastness that made her character as beautiful as her face left no room for hope that she would ever change. In the smarting pain of Esdaile's disappointment there was no anger; the rage that comes of being baffled to natures more self-loving than his, did not tear and torture Sir Wilfrid.

He loved her better than before, it seemed to him, and he could be sorry for her even as she was for him. He could feel for Dunstan now, and the recollection crossed his mind among other whirling thoughts, of his insufficient sympathy with his friend, and of the somewhat contemptuous impatience with which he had seen that Dunstan undervalued all the good turns that fate had done him, just because fate had played him one scurvy trick. Dunstan was right, or at least if not right, helpless in the clutch of a trouble, the strength of whose grip Esdaile could not estimate aright. If love is enough, nothing else suffices; so felt this young man, whose lot was very fairly enviable, and had many a time been envied.

Who was the man whom Janet loved? Who was the unknown enemy that stood between Sir Wilfrid and hope of happiness? "I am not engaged," Janet had said; and again, "I am no happier than you." Sir Wilfrid, when he did not know

anything about love, would have been very likely to think that a high-minded girl like Janet could not possibly have given love unasked to any man, especially as he was of the later generation and had not read Byron. But he had no such stuff in his thoughts now; he would have regarded with sufficient scorn the "curious fool," who should bring upon himself the question:

"Is human love the growth of human will?"

There was somewhere in the world a man whom she loved, and either he was unconscious or heedless of the great prize within reach of his hand, or there was some obstacle in the way, as insurmountable as that which lay in his own, and shut out all the world beyond from his gaze. He might never know which of these two solutions was the true one; he who had cheered up Dunstan, and substantially helped John Sandilands, each in a love-trouble, though widely different in kind, could not help, could not even learn the truth here.

He had crossed the farmyard and a field beyond it, and stepped over a stile into the high-road, when he heard the ringing of ponies' bells that always announced the coming of Miss Ainslie, and presently her little carriage came along at a great pace, Jack and Jill being entirely of their mistress's opinion as to the advisability of getting home. The road was already darkening, and Sir Wilfrid easily hid himself in the shadow made by the trunk of a great leafless tree, as the pretty equipage went by him. He did so by a quick instinct; he was not in spirits for any of Miss Ainslie's lively talk just then.

"She is light-hearted, at all events," thought Sir Wilfrid; "it is a good thing somebody is happy. Long may she remain so;" for he was softened by the trouble he was in; at least, for the present, and in this first phase of it.

Then he recurred to the question: Who was the man? And, revolving this in his mind with but slender chance of a solution, he reached Bevis, and felt, as he had never felt before, that which comes to most, if not to all of us, the setting in of the dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable epoch of existence.

When the morrow came, with the prospect of seeing Janet again in the evening, Sir Wilfrid began to doubt whether he ought to go to The Chantry with Dunstan. There was a contest, even of inclination, in

his feelings, but the longing to see her won, and he persuaded himself that it was what she had said; "we shall meet to-morrow," that decided him. The friends drove over to The Chantry, and found all its inmates assembled in the drawing-room. Janet had taken refuge in the eternal photograph album, which is either a bore or a blessing on most social occasions, and the other persons who were expected to join the party arriving very soon after, there was no opportunity for the awkwardness which she had dreaded with most miserable fear, especially in consideration of the sharp eyes of Amabel. The fervent affection of her lively and observant friend, rendered all that Janet said, and did, and looked, unfailingly interesting to her; but on this occasion she was placed on the same side of the table, and at a safe distance.

Captain Dunstan had found Sir Wilfrid a dull enough companion on their way to The Chantry. On their way home he never spoke at all, and Dunstan began to think he must be still feeling the effects of his recent illness. It never occurred to him, although his own bitterness of feeling was only beginning to yield a little to the influence of time, that any sentimental trouble could have come to his friend. As they were parting for the night, Dunstan said to Sir Wilfrid that he feared he was not quite right yet, and Sir Wilfrid acknowledged that he was not very well. Next morning he told Dunstan that he thought he had better run up to town and see Dr. Long, a capital fellow, who understood him thoroughly—Esdaile had never had a day's illness in his life—as he was really very queer; and indeed it would not make much difference, for he must have left Bevis in a week or so, there was always such a number of business matters to be looked after at that time of year. Dunstan regretted this necessity very much, but they should soon meet; he did not think he should care much about Bevis after Christmas; the hunting was not very good, and the country was cold—in fact, he thought a little sunshine would not be amiss; and what would Sir Wilfrid say to the Riviera? Sir Wilfrid would say nothing to the Riviera for the present; there was time enough, they should see.

The end of it was that when Miss Ainslie drove over that day to the vicarage, she found Sir Wilfrid Esdaile making his

adieux to Mrs. Cathcart, and learned that he had just charged that lady to explain his sudden departure at The Chantry. Miss Ainslie received the statement with less than her usual kindness and with none of her usual vivacity; she was absent in her manner while he stayed, and after he had gone away. Mrs. Cathcart, to whom this was a new mood of her pretty cousin's, asked her what ailed her? To her great surprise, Amabel, who was standing in the bay of the library window, and gazing out upon the lawn, looked round at her with tearful eyes.

"Nothing," she answered, "or at least not much; only one of my follies; one of my absurd presentiments which make me as miserable, until I can contrive to forget them, as all the wisdom of the Grecian sages could do, and," she added, rallying herself, "that must have been pretty dreadful."

"How can you be so absurd!" was Mrs. Cathcart's sympathetic observation; she had laid down a rule for the treatment of Amabel in these respects. "Some more broken bones for Sir Wilfrid, I suppose?"

Sir Wilfrid Esdaile went up to London that same afternoon. It was strange how he was haunted, as he sat in the railway-carriage—a newspaper between his troubled face and the outer world—by two lines of a poem, of which he had forgotten every word beside its name and that of the writer; two lines that sprang suddenly up from some dim corner of memory in which he knew not that he had ever stored them. They were these:

For I can bear my own despair,  
But not another's hope.

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